



# NEWSLETTER

March 2003

Newark Housing Authority

## A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



This past February Newark Housing Authority (NHA) Executive Director Harold Lucas convened an agency-wide staff meeting at Newark Symphony Hall where he shared with employees the fiscal status and future direction of the NHA. Mr. Lucas' remarks centered on the impending federal budget cuts that will inevitably impact public housing authorities throughout the country.

The following are excerpts from the Director's message.

"We were advised that public housing budgets would be cut by 30 percent across the nation, in the operating side of the budget that pays for many of the things we do. We lobbied to mitigate against these cuts but we still don't know what the real numbers are going to be. That means the way that HUD distributes monies to public housing authorities has not been decided yet. Maybe we'll know in June, but starting in April the cut is 30 percent.

"In anticipating this situation, we met with the Unions representing employees, the Board of Commissioners and senior staff and shared this dilemma with them. We have also asked the requisite staff to present plans on how they can reduce costs so that we can meet this challenge head-on.

"We need to have a meeting like this once a year so everybody can see who everybody is. Only through a family approach can we make progress. There are no individuals at the Newark Housing Authority; the only in-charge people are the ones that help each other. It's about the hope we have and the benefits we get from helping the tenants.

"We should be about helping people and there is such a tremendous job ahead of us in the city of Newark. The NHA is one of the premier agencies in this city in terms of hiring and taking care of people who are the least among us.

"It's so important that we continue our progress. Newark is finally turning itself around and people are getting excited.

"But now we have a crisis in this country regarding public housing. The attitude (among policymakers) is that public housing authorities have spent too much for too long in this country.

"We're going to have to work harder. We're operating under a 2003 budget that expires next month, and the 2004 budget is worse than this one. But we're going to try and stay the course. Hiring is frozen at the Newark Housing Authority. Everybody has value if they apply themselves, if they give it a chance and if they are given a chance to shine.

"There are a whole lot of areas we can cut before we get to staff. We can only do it by working together. We have to walk down this road together. We are asking everybody to return to their work areas, check themselves out and try to do the best that you can.

"The hard decisions that are coming down the pike are not going to be borne by any one Union. As a family we want to remain a family; we all have a job to do — let's continue to do it. We have enough people at the Newark Housing Authority to do our jobs properly and that is what we want everybody to do."



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## The NHA Celebrates Black History Month



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A captive audience of NHA employees demonstrated their support of the NHA's Black History Month celebration this past February, setting the tone for a spirited atmosphere that was enlivened by remarks from the keynote speaker, Lenworth Gunther, and a luncheon featuring delectable African American cuisine.

To highlight their cultural heritage, many employees donned African attire for the occasion, which began with the Kwanzaa tradition of honoring our ancestors with the pouring of a libation, coupled with music evocative of Africa and rendered by Chukata, an ensemble of drummers.

In his remarks to employees, NHA Executive Director Harold Lucas acknowledged the struggles endured by our forefathers and that our energies should be used to create good works.

"We got here on the backs of our ancestors, and our efforts should be focused on uplifting ourselves and others.

"We must continue to work together to make the housing authority better, to make our lives better and to make the world better because it's not about us, but about others," Mr. Lucas said.

Featured speaker Dr. Lenworth Gunther, a noted educator and scholar, spoke on his self-titled theme, "Beyond the Bright Lights: The Power and Presence of a People."



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"We need to understand the universality, the struggle of our people, and the greatness of small people who don't get into the history books."

Dr. Lenworth Gunther

## With Characteristic Verve and Style!

He characterized black history as 12 million Africans surviving the holocaust of the slave trade and settling in places like America, Brazil, and Cuba and making their presence felt through their myriad contributions to the world. "Ours is a wonderful history," he asserted, adding, "a warm and rich history."

Dr. Gunther continued, "We need to understand the universality and the struggle of our people, as well as the greatness of small people who didn't get any credit for transforming history."

"We need to understand the depths of our people because who we are is not external, but internal. Our spirit is what guided us through the struggles and beyond the bright lights, there is a power and a presence that transcends all."

The program was coordinated by Arthur N. Martin, Jr., chairman, Legal, LaVerne Dudley, co-chairperson, Legal, Amy Lebron, Revenue Recovery, Bernard Rollins, Modernization, Marcia Robinson, Personnel, Jodi Walston, Executive Office, Olusanya Adewusi, Finance, and Yvonne Reynolds, Public Information.

- 1) Bala Jayaraman, Finance, and Karen Torian, HOPE VI.
- 2) Executive Director Harold Lucas with Dr. Lenworth Gunther.
- 3) Foreground: Gloria Currey-Williams, Family Services, and Sandra Jenkins, Administration. Standing: Elio Mena, Legal, Background: Antoinette Tillery, Contracts, A. Kevin Medlin, Contracts, and Dorothy Thompson, Modernization.
- 4) Members of Chukata showcase their African music repertoire with Dr. Gunther (seated left.)
- 5) Olusanya Adewusi, Finance, Jodi Walston, Executive Office, Joseph Foushee, Security, and Shayee Araromi, Assistant Executive Director.
- 6) Carolyn Reese, Property Management.
- 7) Tajji Lewis, Occupancy, Kim Worthington, Section 8, and Dana Smith, IT.
- 8) NHA staff lift up their voices in song.



## NHA Executive Director Receives Humanitarian Award

Several notables from the boxing world, area youth and community representatives recently joined NHA Executive Director Harold Lucas at C.O.M.B.A.T.T.'s (Community Organization Making Boxing Alternatives Today for Tomorrow), First Annual Awards Dinner and Celebrity Reception to celebrate his achievement as the recipient of the organization's "Humanitarian Award."

Mr. Lucas was selected for the award in recognition of his work in the Newark community. Specifically, he helped C.O.M.B.A.T.T., a community-based, amateur boxing organization for at-risk youths, implement the athletic training part of the program and resurrect the old Dukers Athletic Club at an NHA housing complex in 1996.



1) Executive Director Harold Lucas with fellow honoree Emanuel Steward, legendary boxing trainer and former National Golden Gloves champion.

2) Merian Oliver-Williams, Legal, former World Heavyweight Champion Larry Holmes, and Charles Bell, Affirmative Action.

3) Joseph Bianco, Redevelopment, New Jersey Athletic Commissioner and C.O.M.B.A.T.T.'s founder, Larry Hazzard, Sr., Executive Director Harold Lucas, and Dwight Brown, Property Management.

4) Newark Mayor Sharpe James and Executive Director Harold Lucas.

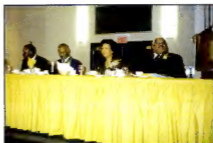




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Under the direction of its brainchild, New Jersey Boxing Commissioner Larry Hazzard, Sr., C.O.M.B.A.T.T. addresses many critical issues that professional boxers face, both inside and outside the ring. Program participants, through a network of public/private organizations, receive services ranging from physical fitness and boxing skills training and nutrition to education, economic and social development and cultural enrichment.

Proceeds from the benefit, held at Robert Treat Hotel, will help C.O.M.B.A.T.T. to open its own facility, which is scheduled to open in May 2003.

- 5) Joyce Morgan, Executive Office, with boxing promoter, Murad Muhammad.
- 6) World Middleweight Champion Bernard Hopkins, flanked by Albert Lucas, a staff member of the International Boxing Federation/United States Boxing Association, congratulates Executive Director Harold Lucas.
- 7) Donald Moore, Modernization, Sandra Jenkins, Administration, Vernita Sias-Hill, Assistant Executive Director.
- 8) Boxing greats Marvis Frazier with his father, Joe Frazier, honoree Marian Muhammad, president of the International Boxing Federation/United States Boxing Association, and honoree Barry D. Jordan, M.D., M.P.H.



## NHA Takes Steps to Combat Gang Violence

As part of a collaborative effort between a consortium of city and county agencies and Newark Housing Authority (NHA) residents, the NHA sponsored its First Annual Anti-Gang Conference to provide NHA tenant association presidents and other community leaders with valuable information on, and insight into, the gang culture and preventive strategies to help reduce gang-related crimes at NHA complexes.

Held at the Robert Treat Hotel this past January, the conference, entitled "From Now On," included a forum for tenant association presidents, representatives from educational institutions, social service and law enforcement agencies, the clergy community and community activists to participate in seminars on *Gang Awareness*, *Gang Prevention in Public Housing*, *Gang Alternatives and Recreational Activities*, *Job Training, Employment and Counseling*, and the *Housing One Strike Rule*, which permits housing authorities to evict families for drug-related offenses.

"This conference is a first step toward addressing gangs," said NHA Executive Director Harold Lucas to those assembled. "Those who we want to save are in the gang. Somewhere along the way we got away from taking care of our own."

Deputy Mayor Evelyn Williams, who read a statement from Newark Mayor Sharpe James, stated, "We are here to discuss an unhappy but extremely important subject. Gangs create a dangerous environment wherever they operate... and disrespect our neighborhoods and families who try to build strong neighborhoods."

The conference was a joint venture between the NHA Affirmative Action Department, the City of Newark, the Newark Municipal Council's Anti-Gang Taskforce and NHA tenant associations.



- 1) Workshop participants attending one of the seminars.
- 2) Mr. Lucas gives remarks as Councilman and Affirmative Action Director Charles Bell (seated left) and NHA Security Director Joseph Foushee look on.
- 3) Several members of the NHA's Voices of Hope Choir provide a respite for participants and engage in inspirational song.
- 4) Workshop panelists (left to right) include B.J. Walton, Affirmative Action, Latonya Easterling, Public Housing Family Self-Sufficiency, and other agency representatives.



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## NHA Wins Passage of Plan to Designate "Seniors Only" Housing

As part of an initiative designed to improve the delivery of services and respond to the needs of seniors, the Newark Housing Authority (NHA), in an historic first for the state's largest public housing authority, recently secured HUD approval of its application to designate certain housing complexes as "seniors only" buildings.

At a press conference at James C. White Manor where NHA residents and federal, state and city officials gathered, NHA Executive Director Harold Lucas said, "Our elderly residents have long advocated for buildings to be designated as seniors only, but we had to follow federal housing regulations that prohibited any process that would mitigate against the young.

"Previously, few non-elderly disabled residents shared developments with seniors following the construction of elderly developments in the city. The passage of Sec-

tion 10 of the Housing Opportunity Program Extension Act by Congress in 1996, however, established three distinct housing groups (disabled, elderly, and disabled and elderly families).

"The hue and cry from seniors for separate housing, particularly apart from the young, has been a major concern of housing authorities for years," said Mr. Lucas.

"Therefore, for HUD to grant approval of our application is most gratifying to the NHA's Board of Commissioners and especially to our senior residents.

*(Continued on pg.8)*

- 1) Executive Director Harold Lucas addressing seniors at James C. White Manor with Commissioner Ida Clark (seated left) and Councilman Charles Bell (seated right).
- 2) Seniors listen attentively as Mr. Lucas explains the NHA's new policy on "seniors only" housing.



Officials from the Newark Housing Authority (NHA) and the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) recently met with several residents who live in Mt. Pleasant Estates to prepare them for the process of buying their respective housing unit. Under the initiative, which is sanctioned by HUD regulations, the NHA will serve as the mortgage lender, creating a "win-win" situation for both residents and the Authority. Mt. Pleasant Estates, a 42-unit townhouse development, is located in the city's North Ward and was acquired by the NHA several years ago. NHA Executive Director Harold Lucas called the venture a "monumental step that NHA residents are taking and the NHA is enthusiastic and ready to move this project in a positive direction."



## NHA Institutes New Policy Designating "Seniors Only" Housing

*Continued from pg. 7*

"Our seniors and staff are both pleased because HUD's approval enables us to better focus our services on each of the resident populations," Mr. Lucas added.

Under the approved plan, James C. White Manor, 516 Bergen Street, and GiGi Foushee Towers, 68-89 Lincoln Street, have been designated as "seniors only" complexes, and one building at specific NHA complexes, including Stephen Crane Elderly, 815 N. 6th Street; Stephen Crane Elderly Homes, 880 Franklin Avenue; Seth Boyden Homes, 46 Evergreen Street; and Otto Kretschmer Homes, 100 Ludlow Street, is strictly for elderly occupancy.

The NHA Executive Director reminded the audience of more than 200 that differences in generational lifestyles presented severe impositions on the tranquility of older residents.

"We have been fully aware of the generational differences within our mixed population sites, and we now have HUD's approval to provide a remedy."

Mr. Lucas also said that no disabled family would be forced to relocate from a building that has been designated elderly only but incentives will be offered to make the transition from mixed occupancy to elderly-only viable.

- 1) Desiree Taylor of New Jersey Network interviews NHA Commissioner Ida Clark at the press conference.
- 2) Seniors enjoy refreshments and the company of their neighbors.

### NOTEWORTHY

The Newark Housing Authority can now provide access to NHA services to Newark residents with hearing disabilities. The NHA recently purchased and installed a TTD (Teletypewriter) Machine, which is currently operating in the NHA's Occupancy Department and is expected to be installed in another NHA department soon.

The NHA recently concluded its participation in the 2002 Public Employee Charitable Campaign (PECC), with employee contributions totaling \$31,240 and 100 percent departmental participation. This year's \$20,000 goal was easily surpassed, once again reflecting employees' generosity and caring toward those who are in need of social, medical and other vital services. Mike E. Rodriguez and Maria T. Campana, Public Information Department, served as the NHA's in-house coordinators.

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#### BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

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